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THE
INSUFFICIENCY
OF THE
LIGHT OF NATURE:
EXEMPLIFIED
IN THE VICES AND DEPRAVITY
OF THE
HEATHEN WORLD.
INCLUDING SOME STRICTURES ON
PAINE'S "AGE of REASON."

by John Helton.

"The World by Wisdom knew not God."

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author wishes to avoid a formal preface, yet thinks it necessary to inform the Reader, that he has been led to an investigation of the following subject, by frequent reflections 'on the deistical tenet, that, "Revelation is unnecessary, the light of nature being a sufficient guide in matters of religion." To which has been lately added, "The Deist lives more consistently and morally than the Christian."

In order to ascertain the truth of these positions, instead of ascending into the airy regions of speculation, the candid enquirer after truth is least liable to deception, by appeal to matter of fact: an impartial view of the state of the heathen world, before the promulgation of the gospel, seems to be the surest ground we can tread on. And that the deist may have every advantage he can reasonably desire, the picture shall be drawn

from his boasted Age of Reason, when the arts and sciences were supposed to have attained their meridian, and when the most distinguished characters for wisdom, learning and piety, that ever appeared in the heathen world, made a most conspicuous figure.

Those authors who could give the best information on the subject, have been carefully consulted, and considerable extracts given from Cicero, Plutarch's Lives, Josephus's Wars of the Jews, Stanley's Lives of the Philosophers, Cumberland's Laws of Nature, Montaigne's Essays, Bayle's Biographical Dictionary, Abbé Pluche's History of the Heavens, Rollin's History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients; and several sentences will be found interspersed in the work, which have been borrowed from other writers, whose names have been forgotten.

The Deist can make no reasonable objection to the greater part of these authors. The two former were heathen priests, and often speak highly of their religion, and several of the others, if they were not Deists, were certainly no enemies to the cause, and therefore their evidence must be admitted as unexceptionable.

This

This tract, which is designed as an antidote against Paine's Age of Reason, is drawn up for the use of those who are unacquainted with the subjects here treated of, that by comparing the state of the heathen world, with the glorious light of the Gospel dispensation, they may gratefully acknowledge the superior mercies we are favoured with.

A considerable part of the work, consisting of extracts from the foregoing authors, I had only to arrange, and apply under their proper heads, and as they are familiar to those who are acquainted with the subjects, have been repeatedly quoted, and their accuracy never called in question, it is thought unnecessary to be more particular, by giving marginal references, which would enhance the price of the tract, and be of no advantage to the persons for whom it is principally intended.

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THE
INSUFFICIENCY
OF THE
LIGHT OF NATURE, &c.

CHAP. I.

IT is alarming to reflect what a rapid progress infidelity has made in this and a neighbouring kingdom, and painful to observe with what avidity deistical sentiments are received, and with what industry they are propagated by men of restless spirits who labor to pervert mankind.

Among the numerous Publications of this description which have lately appeared to disturb the tranquility of the serious, the 'Age of Reason' may be considered as one of the most dangerous; not because its author has advanced any new or weighty argument to invalidate the truths of christianity, or has handled the weapons of infidelity in a more dexterous or an abler manner than others of his sect; for though we

must admit him to be possessed of distinguished abilities, he labors under the manifest disadvantage of treating on a subject he seems not to understand ; and whether his ignorance be real or affected, he appears neither accurate in history or chronology, regardless of dates, frequently, I hope not designedly, confounding them, and on almost every occasion grossly misrepresenting the christian system. But what renders this Pamphlet peculiarly dangerous, is, its being adapted to the taste and inclinations of many who are enemies to christian Religion, because the precepts of its divine gospel militate against their conduct : such persons wanting that which to themselves would be the best proof of the truth of christianity, its internal effect in changing and regulating *their own* hearts and manners, are disposed to speak slightly of what they do not wish to understand ; and this writer would spare them the trouble of a cooler investigation, by substituting in its place bold and impudent assertions, supplying the want of argument with ridicule, and blending with the tenets of christian belief, those absurd doctrines and practices, which the weakness or wickedness of mankind had engrafted upon it.

If this author's assertion, that "the Deist lives more consistently and morally than the Christian," were founded in truth, it would be an undeniable argument in favour of deism ; but unfortunately for the cause he espouses, the generality of its advocates have been notorious for their immoral conduct, and perhaps the most effectual antidote to the poison of deism is an appeal

peal to matter of fact ; let us then take an impartial review of the state of the heathen world, before the promulgation of the Gospel.

I acknowledge that several of the ancient philosophers have uttered sublime truths, and given refined lessons of morality, on which deistical writers have laid great stress, and adduced them as proofs that revelation is unnecessary : but a slight acquaintance with profane history must convince us that the accounts of heathen morality handed down to us are exceedingly partial in a variety of respects. A small number of the most distinguished characters are selected, and their best sayings and virtues exhibited, whilst their manifest inconsistencies and imperfections are either slightly glossed over, or wholly concealed. Hence we are informed of the divine sayings of Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, &c.—The latter, it is true, declares that “ all great men are divinely inspired ;” but in almost the same breath he contradicts himself, and asks “ whoever thanked the Gods for virtue or wisdom ?” these moral philosophers could not indeed thank them for virtue, it being their maxim “ that none ever ascribed his virtue to the deity.”

Respecting the immortality of the soul, we find Socrates thus expressing himself, “ I cannot but think it consistent with reason to assert that the soul is immortal ;” yet we learn that in his last moments reason was not adequate to the removal of his doubts, for we find him thus addressing his Judges ; “ and now

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O ! Judges

O! Judges, ye are going to live, and I to die ; which of these is best the gods know, but I suppose no man does :” the same evident indecision we find in the writings of Plato, for after treating a variety of subjects in his first book of laws, he candidly confesses “ what we have now said has arisen but from pure conjecture.”

If we may credit the testimony of the sacred scriptures, which is abundantly confirmed by heathen authority, the grossest idolatry prevailed amongst all nations.—The Chaldeans from among whom God called Abraham, though more antient and more learned than the Persians or Egyptians, were not less guilty of idolatry. The children of Israel were peculiarly warned against their worship in this solemn caution, “ lest thou lift up thine eyes to heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them.” That these were the gods of the Chaldeans is witnessed by R. Maimondes, who says, “ they held the seven planets to be gods and goddesses, married to each other, but the two luminaries to be the greatest. “ Their greatest god,” he continues, “ is the sun,” which is confirmed by Herodotus, who had seen and minutely describes the temple of Belus, at Babylon, which was dedicated to the sun : he informs us that “ on the great altar the Chaldeans burn yearly of frankincense to the value of one hundred thousand talents to their gods.”

The Canaanites, amongst whom the Patriarchs sojourned before they went down into Egypt, were also
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an idolatrous people, and Egypt may be justly esteemed the fruitful mother of all superstition and idolatry. Hence we find the Lord declaring, "against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment," and that they were strangers to the true God, is evident, from Pharoah's answer to Moses, "who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." When the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria, he planted Samaria with colonies from his other dominions, but *these men*, we are informed, did not fear the Lord, but set up and worshipped their own Idols. We are further told that the king of Assyria worshipped in the house of Nifroch his god; *2 Kings* v. 19. 37.—and in his boasting speech to Hezekiah, king of Judah, after enumerating the different nations he had subdued, he exultingly asks "have any of the gods of these nations delivered them out of my hands?" What kind of gods they were, we learn from Hezekiah's address to the Supreme Being, when he prayed to be delivered from the King of Assyria; "of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were no gods but the work of man's hands, wood and stone. v. 17. 18."

Cyrus, king of Persia, brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and put them in the house of his gods, *Ezra* 1. 7. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, set up a golden image in the plain of Dura,

to be worshipped by all his subjects under pain of death; and Belshazzar, his son, made a great feast to his princes, and drank wine, and praised his gods of gold and silver; *Daniel* v. 4. 23. upon which occasion we find the prophet thus addressing him "thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which we see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

This is the scripture account of that gross idolatry which prevailed amongst all nations except the Jews; and even that highly favored people frequently fell into it, to the excess of offering human sacrifices to idols, for the Scriptures informs us, that "The children of Israel, imitating the nations around them, fell into idolatry; for having forsaken the commandments of the Lord their God, they made a grove, and worshipped the host of heaven, and served Baal, and caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire."—2 *Kings*, xvii. 16, 17.

Plutarch relates, that in his time a bloody war arose between the Cynopolitans or dog-worshippers, and the Oxyrinchitans, because the former had eaten a fish, to which the latter paid divine honors. Diodorus's account of the antient heathens is, "that beholding universal nature, and struck with admiration, they thought the sun and moon were the prime eternal gods, calling the one Osiris, and the other Isis." Agreeable to which we find Aristotle declaring, "It hath been delivered to us by those of very antient times,

times, both that the stars are gods, and that the Divinity comprehends all that we know of nature." Pliny is of the same sentiment, for he says, "The world, or heavenly canopy, must in reason be thought a Deity." We find Strabo too declaring, "That which containeth us all, and the earth and the sea, which we call the world, must in reason be thought a Deity." And because the object of Jewish adoration was invisible, Juvenal, when writing of them, asserted, "The Jews worship no deity but the clouds."

We are informed by Herodotus, that "the Persians were not like the Greeks, in thinking the gods of human birth and original; but their way was ascending to the tops of mountains, where sacrificing to Jove, they called the whole circle of heaven Jove."

Plutarch, speaking of the Egyptians, affirms that "they take the supreme God and the universe for the same thing." Hence they deified universal nature under the name of Isis; and Apis, or Serapis, another of their deities, means the world; for Serapis, being asked by Nicocreon, king of the Cypriots, what god he was, is made to answer, "I am a god such as I now describe myself; the starry heaven is my head, the sea is my belly, the earth my feet, mine ears are in the æther, and mine eye is the bright lamp of the universe, the sun." Nor did their idolatry end here, every province having its own peculiar gods, worshipping cattle, birds, reptiles, fishes; nay, they descended to the adoration of things still more abject,

as garlic, onions, and many other kinds of garden herbs.—Hence Juvenal, and a number of heathen authors, ridicule the Egyptians for prostrating themselves before a goat, and paying worship to an onion.

The Greeks were considered as the most learned and refined nation under heaven, they boasted of their wise men, philosophers, and poets, and that the arts and sciences had their origin with them; yet all their knowledge did not shield them from gross idolatry.—The apostle Paul informs us, that at Athens they had an altar with this inscription, “To the unknown God.” At Ephesus they had a magnificent temple dedicated to Diana, the origin of which deity is thus described by the town clerk of that city: “Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter.” *Acts* xix. 35. which when the apostle exhorted them to forsake the worship of, and turn to the living God, the multitude rose up, and in the greatness of their zeal for the national religion, accused Paul, saying, “Not only at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that there is a danger that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth”. *Acts* xix. 26.—And this scripture account is confirmed by Pausanias, who says, “The name of Diana
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is so renowned, that the people of Cappadocia, Pontus, the Lydians, &c. contested with the Ephesians, which of them had possession of the true statue."

The Romans, whose boasted refinements, wisdom, and virtue, are so highly extolled, and so warmly commended to our imitation; even they, professing themselves to be wise, became fools, and changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, *Rom. i. 22.* Accordingly we find they had idolatrous temples, priests, and a variety of indecent ceremonies. Indeed, the Roman gods and goddeses were so numerous, they could scarcely find names for them: they had their gods and goddeses cœlestial, and terrestrial; marine and river gods; infernal gods; virtues, and good deities; vices, and evil deities; temples dedicated to fame; to fortune; and a grove consecrated to the furies.—Introducing into their catalogue the strange gods of the different nations which they had conquered. So that what Plutarch said of the writings of the philosophers, may with great propriety be applied to the Romans, "They have crowded heaven and earth, the air and sea, with gods."

Intimately connected with idolatry are the various superstitious ceremonies which abounded amongst them, and indeed formed a part of their religion. The Chaldeans, Greeks, Romans, &c. never attempted any important business without having first recourse

recourse to divination; and in such high esteem was this science held, that their augurs or priests, whose office it was to interpret by dreams, oracles, and prodigies, whether any action should be fortunate or unfortunate to an individual, or to the commonwealth; were chosen out of the nobility. They divined by appearances in the heavens, as thunder, lightning, comets, &c. and were determined by the thunder coming from the right or left, the number of claps, &c. They consulted the flight of birds, and from their number, singing, &c. drew good or bad omens. And that they might not be detained too long in waiting for a bird, the priests supplied the want by introducing what they termed sacred chickens, kept in a cage for this purpose: on every such occasion, the augur commanding a profound silence, ordered the cage to be opened, and a handful of crumbs to be thrown down in the presence of the magistrates, that they might gravely observe how the chickens swallowed their food, and thence be enabled to infer future consequences. Can we avoid smiling at this Age of Reason? when we find such superstition formed into a science, reduced to constant and fixed rules, sanctioned by the highest authority, and embraced by a people of the greatest genius; who did not blush to make the issue of the most important events, to depend on such absurd and trivial circumstances.

Equally ridiculous were their other arts of divination, though in their view of the greatest moment, being,

being, as they conceived, expressly enjoined by their gods: among these was the inspection of the entrails of birds and beasts; when every victim underwent the strictest scrutiny. It was to be the choicest of its kind, and free from outward or inward imperfection. They had exact rules to fix the choice, and all attending circumstances were strictly to be observed. Every motion of the victim on his way to the altar was to be noticed: if he advanced in a straight line; followed his leader without compulsion; if his blood flowed freely, and his entrails were found perfect, they then believed the gods propitious, and promised themselves success in their undertaking. On the contrary, if the victim crossed the way, was forcibly dragged to the altar, escaped the stroke, roared aloud when he received it, died with difficulty, if his entrails were found imperfect or disordered; these were considered as unfavorable omens, sufficient to appal the stoutest heart. Hence we find some of the bravest generals, both among the Greeks and Romans, so terrified at an unfavorable prognostic, that during the panic, a considerable part of the army has been cut off, while they have been expecting a more favourable omen.

Divination by serpents was also considered of great importance, as thereby they expected to obtain some knowledge of the will of the gods: the folds and motions of serpents were therefore viewed with the most religious attention, and such faith placed in them as predictive of future events, that persons were appointed to feed them, and the study of this branch of divination

divination became so abstruse, that the human mind was hardly adequate to it. It is not to be doubted that these were religious ceremonies, for Cicero, speaking of the magi, says, "they assembled in temples, or consecrated places, to consult about divination." Strabo says, "The antient divines were much esteemed," and Lucian styles them, "a kind of persons skilful in divination, and dedicated to the gods, being the only persons whose prayers the gods would hear." Plutarch informs us, that "the most eminent philosophers were constant in the practice of these absurdities, even Pythagorus, who was learned in judicial astrology, and used all kinds of divination,"—which is confirmed by Cicero, who relates, that the Pythagoreans observed not only the voices of the gods, but of men also, which they call omens." And Varro speaks of Pythagoras as "skilful in hydromancy, which came from Persia, and was practiced by Numa, wherein they used blood and invocation of dæmons."

This art is thus particularly described by Pfellus; "They take a basin full of water, convenient for the dæmons to glide to the bottom; this water seems to make a noise as if it breathed, though in substance it differs nothing from other water, but through the virtue infused therein by charms, becomes more excellent, and better suited to receive a prophetic spirit; this is a particular terrestrial dæmon, attracted by compositions; as soon as he glideth into the water, he maketh a small inarticulate sound, to denote his presence, after which the water running over, there
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are certain whispers heard, with some prediction of the future."

Astrology, the most irrational of all sciences, seems also to have been a strong pillar of the heathen religion. The planets were the seat of their gods, and the sun and moon they conceived to have a principal influence in directing events upon earth: to the others they attributed distinct properties, "Jupiter and Venus were benevolent, Mars and Saturn the reverse; they called them "the Interpreters," saying, "the planets are efficient causes in every thing that happens in life; deciding on the future lot of man, at his nativity; foretelling what things shall come to pass, the life and actions of mankind being subject to their rule and governance." It is therefore that we so frequently hear of the benign influence of the moon in conjunction with Jupiter, and the happiness of those born under the sign Libra, contrasted with the malignity of the conjunction of the moon with Saturn, and the dreadful fate of those born under the sign Scorpio; hence, in order to evade any evil, and to obtain every good, they postponed all business till they should be under a favorable planet. The month, day, and hour were to be watched, before any business of moment could be undertaken. "This art (says the abbé Pluche) which seems to be the phrenzy of a disordered mind, consisted principally in being able to combine the situation of the planets; to mark whether their influences proceeded in parallel, oblique, or perpendicular lines." Happy indeed
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had it been for mankind, had these been only the ravings of a delirious mind; and practised for the amusement of such persons; but they extended to the wisest, and most refined nations, who were employed with unceasing anxiety in studying auspicious seasons, days, and critical moments. "Can we view this picture (says the same author) without lamenting how greatly the human mind is debased, in supposing the will of the gods discoverable by the folds and motions of serpents, the shooting of flames, the crackling of salts, or the blazing of liquors thrown into the fire upon heathen altars?" It is with great truth that he adds, "The ravings of a delirious man are more coherent than the principles thus laid down, and the consequences deduced from them. But this was the smallest evil resulting from this art, for astrology, in some sense, did more mischief than idolatry itself; the latter, criminal as it was, permitted some remains of gratitude for favors received, and of religious awe for the infinitely Just, who punishes wicked actions. But astrology completed the ruin of every virtue. To prudence, to experience, and wise precaution, it substituted superstitious forms, and puerile practices. It enervated mens courage, by apprehensions grounded on a few puns and quibbles. It abolished the practice of virtue, and quieted criminal minds, by making them cast upon the unavoidable impression of the predominant planet, those evils which were but the result of their natural depravity."

How

How or when idolatry, with all its superstitious attendants, was first introduced into the world, cannot easily be ascertained. The ingenious abbé Pluche supposes “ it had its origin in Egypt, and that the true source of idolatry, and of all superstition, is the abuse of the language of astronomy, which invented those names, characters, and figures, since converted by ignorance and lust into powers deserving our adoration. The heaven of the poets, and the primitive ground of the whole heathen mythology, being in its origin nothing more than an harmless and innocent way of writing, but stupidly mistaken, and grossly understood in the sense appearing to the eye, instead of what it was intended to offer to the mind.” Hence he concludes, that “ the Osiris, Isis, and Horus of the Egyptians, were originally only three keys to the ancient writings, or the symbols of the solar, the civil, and the rural year; mere ensigns, or public marks and figures, posted up in conspicuous places, to direct the people, and regulate the feasts, and public works; but the indifference and brutality of the people caused them to neglect the understanding of the signs antiently established for their instruction. The same ignorance made them transform the signs of the sun, the seasons and feasts, or the symbolical men and animals, into so many gods, with which their imagination peopled heaven.”

It is highly probable, that though the gods of Egypt were communicated to Asia, and several other nations, idolatry had its origin previous to the Flood,

as we are informed, that before that period "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," *Gen. vi. 12.* That "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." But one thing is evident, both from sacred and prophane history, that whether idolatry originated with the Chaldeans or Egyptians, the world was overspread with it in Abraham's time.

From the various testimonies we have collected, there is every reason to conclude, that the earliest idolatry was the worship of the sun, moon, &c. and that images were originally intended as emblematical figures of outward nature. Hence we find that at Heliopolis, or the city of the sun, the Egyptians worshipped a bull consecrated to the sun; at the city of Hermanthus, in the magnificent temple of Apollo, they worshipped a bull, called Pacis, consecrated to the sun; and Juno, *i. e.* the air, was sacred in Thebais, and honored with human sacrifices under the form of a vulture. Adad of the Assyrians (the Egyptian Osiris, and the Moloch of the Canaanites) to whom human sacrifices were offered, was worshipped under the figure of a man riding on a lion, surrounded with rays of light.

All these images (says Cumberland) were introduced into Greece, and thence into Rome, where we find a Roman idol represented with three heads, the likeness of a dog, a bull, and a lion; some have supposed that Proserpine, another Roman goddess, was of the same figure, and Virgil mentions her three countenances.

tenances. Porphyry and Eusebius agree in the account which she is said to have given of herself; I am called, said she, of a three-fold nature, and also three-headed; many and various are my forms, and I bear three similitudes, or images, of the earth, the air, the fire. At the temple of Apollo were two golden eagles, which were sacred to the Jove or Jupiter of the Romans; and this Jove was the supreme deity of their religious worship, the same with Jupiter Olympius, whom Antiochus Epiphanes endeavored to substitute instead of the true God; and to have the temple in Jerusalem called the temple of Jupiter Olympius. Hence it clearly appears that the supreme Being was not the object of their religious adoration, for whenever the heathens speak of a Supreme Deity, they mean a supreme among their deities, which they sometimes explained into a Jupiter of the hero kind; sometimes into a mystical first nature, sometimes into the soul of the world, and frequently into infinite matter." Need we marvel then at the poor heathen's address, when he says, "O Jupiter, for thy name is all I know of thee!"

Hence we find in the sacred scriptures, that the deities of the gentiles are constantly entitled, no gods, idols, other gods, strange gods; and the apostle Paul, reasoning with the Athenians concerning their idolatrous religion, and exposing its absurdities, exhorted them to change the object of their religious worship, saying, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold,

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or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." At the same time, pointing out to them the true object of adoration, "God that made the world, and all things therein, who is Lord of heaven and earth, and who hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world." *Acts* xvii. 24. 29. But these doctrines were so little relished or understood, by that sensual idolatrous people, that they derided his message, asserting that, "he brought strange things to their ears, and was a setter forth of strange gods."

"Indeed (says Cumberland) some few branches of the heathen popular religion were disliked by the philosophers; they were not reconciled to the human sacrifices which were offered up to their cruel deities: Pliny boasts that the Romans were free from such impious superstitions, though he acknowledges these barbarous sacrifices were frequent throughout Sicily and Italy; but Tertullian, Lactantius, and Grotius assert, that the Romans sacrificed men to Saturnus, and that it was usual with them, in great festivals, to give men to be devoured by wild beasts. Men that were sacrificed to the gods, (says Grotius) for the clearing of a city from the pestilence or any other disease, were called Catharmarta, which custom obtained among the Romans; and he adds, the Athenians also get certain base and worthless persons, and in time of any calamity, these are sacrificed to the gods. The Lacedemonians (says Lactantius) sacrificed men to Mars; and Phylarchus affirms that all the Greeks did the like."

Plutarch,

Plutarch, though he wishes to clear the Greeks and Romans from the imputation of this horrid practice, cannot help saying, "At the appearance of this war with the Gauls, in obedience to some prophecies contained in the books of the Sybils, the Romans thought themselves obliged to bury alive, in the place called the beast market, a man and a woman, and likewise two Gauls, one of each sex." Livy mentions this sacrifice, and another of the same kind, at the beginning of the second Punic war. Plutarch again, treating of the memorable sea-fight between the Greeks and Persians) thus expresses himself, "While Themistocles was sacrificing in the admiral galley, three beautiful captives were brought to him, richly dressed and adorned with gold, said to be the children of the sister of Xerxes. As soon as the soothsayer saw them, and observed, that at the same time the fire blazed out with extraordinary brightness, and that one sneezed to the right; he took Themistocles by the hand, and ordered that the three youths should be consecrated, and sacrificed to Bacchus Omestes, for thereby the Greeks would not only save themselves, but also obtain victory." And in another place, he declares, "I myself have seen several boys whipped to death at the foot of Diana's altar; the oracle having commanded, let the altar of the goddess be sprinkled with blood."

If these learned and polite nations were guilty of this horrid custom, we need not marvel at the more unenlightened and barbarous people, being in the

constant practice of it. Lactantius assures us, that "The Carthaginians, being overcome by Agathocles king of Sicily, and suspecting their gods were angry with them, sacrificed two hundred noblemens' sons at once." Diodorus informs us, that "The Gauls and Germans were in the same practice," and Tacitus says, "In Britain they were wont to sacrifice captives to Mars, and the Druids were great men-sacrificers." In short, this practice, which so much disgraces humanity, seems to have prevailed universally amongst all nations, even the children of Israel, who (as the sacred scriptures inform us,) "imitating the nations with which they were surrounded, mingled among the heathens, and learned their works; and served their idols; yea, they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood." *Psalms* cvi. 35.

Although some few branches of the heathen religion were disliked by the philosophers, yet in the main they professed the same sentiments with the vulgar. Their rule was, "To worship the Divinity according to the law and rites of their country, and the custom of their ancestors." They were so far from designing a change in religion, that Cicero and Epictetus advise men to comply with the established religion of their country; and Socrates, in his last moments, assented to the popular idolatry, saying to his friend, "O Crito, I owe Æsculapius a cock, pay it, neglect it not."

Indeed

Indeed it seems to have been an universal belief in the heathen world, that the sun and moon were deities whom all men should sacrifice and pray to; and even Plutarch stiles this religion "The pious faith derived from their ancestors, the pure worship of the Divinity."

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

HAVING thus taken a view of the gross idolatry and superstition of the heathen world, we may reasonably conclude, that as they had no just conception of the Supreme Being and his divine attributes, they were guilty of what is charged against Homer, "Instead of making men live like the gods, the gods were made to live like men, agitated by vexation, hatred, anger, and various passions unworthy of even a wise man." Their morality was therefore defective in a great variety of particulars.

First, " Their pride and arrogance (says Cumberland) were conspicuous, ascribing all to their own virtues; hence they ask, what need is there of prayers? make *thyself* happy: and yet so inconsistent were they, as to assert, all men ascribe the commodity and prosperity of life to the gods, but none ever ascribed his virtue to the Deity. Let him give life and riches, I will get myself a good mind. Speaking of wisdom, they declare, every one that hath it, oweth it

it to himself. In some respects they make the wise man transcend even the chief of their gods, for Seneca says, there is something wherein a wise man may have the precedence of God: he is wise by the benefit of nature, not by his own efficiency as the wise man is. The wise man seeth and contemneth all things which others possess, with as equal a mind as Jupiter; and upon this account more admireth himself; Jupiter cannot make use of them, the wise man will not. As to the body, says Epictetus, thou art a small part of the universe, but in respect of the mind or reason, not worse or less than the gods. Jupiter, says Sextus, hath more, and can do more for mankind, but between two that are good, the richer is not the better. Do you enquire of the difference between a wise man and the gods? The gods will exist a longer time, but it is a great artifice to inclose the whole in a little space." And both Socrates and Plato assert, that "The wise man is self sufficient." Need we then marvel to find their whole conduct marked by pride and ostentation? or to observe that these philosophers had not only a supreme contempt for all mankind, but also for each other: hence their continual quarrels, and abusive language; they frequently charged each other with pride; Diogenes, trampling under his feet a fine carpet of Plato's, exclaimed, "I tread upon the pride of Plato;" yes, (replied Plato) but with how much more Pride;" Socrates saw pride in the holes of Antisthenes's cloak, and in return, it was said of Socrates, that "he was extremely desirous of glory, though he most of all dissembled

dissembled it." Indeed, his haughty demeanor before his judges, seems to be the reason why they passed sentence of death on him; Cicero informs us that "He addressed his judges with an insulting smile as if he was their master, quoting what the Delphic oracle said of him, That no man was more free, more just, or more wise."

Pride, indeed, appears to have been the source of their most boasted virtues: hence Seneca applauds Cato's barbarous self-murder, saying, that "He scorned to be a petitioner to any, either for his death or his life, and was a contemner of all powers." And there is too much ground for the charge, that "Pride made Plato an envious man; Socrates, an angry man; the Cynic, a boaster of his great achievements, and the same pride, no doubt, made Cicero complain to his wife, saying, "Neither the gods, whom thou hast most chastely served, nor man, whom I have constantly saved, have requited us." Plutarch informs us, that "Cicero was intemperately fond of praise, and passionately desirous of glory to the very last; it cleaving to him like a disease." Lactantius has preserved a remarkable anecdote of Cicero, which almost passes belief. "On the death of his daughter Tullia he was inconsolable, but determined to deify her, saying, if the offspring of Cadmus or Amphytrion, and the renowned sons of Leda, deserved to be advanced to the heavens, the same honor ought to be paid to you, which I will certainly perform, and rank you, (the best and most learned of your sex) among the immortal gods, who will approve of it as well as mankind."

Secondly,

Secondly, The virtue and morality of the wisest and best of the philosophers, were of a very partial nature. They indeed asserted, that "the public universal good is the greatest good." We find Marcus Antoninus uttering this beautiful sentiment, replete with benevolence: "Because I am of kin to all the universe, I will practise nothing unsocial; but rather will I take care of those who are my kindred, and incline my whole man to the common utility. Often say to thyself, I am a member of that system of rational beings; but if thou sayest, I am a distinct part of that system, thou dost not love them from thy heart, nor consider thyself as comprehended in the whole." But how exceedingly confined were they in the application of this just and wise maxim! they had no idea of extending it beyond their own nation, beyond their own heathen catholic system; to these only were they charitably affected, for the Christians, whom they termed aliens, they treated as though they were no longer men, and even the mild and philosophic Marcus Antoninus persecuted *them* with the greatest severity. And so imperfect were the ideas which Plato had of justice, mercy, and universal benevolence, that we find him thus reasoning: "All Greeks are near of kin, but extraneous and different from Barbarians: when the Grecians and Barbarians encounter, this is properly called fighting, for they are enemies by nature; but if Grecians, which are friends by nature, quarrel with Grecians, this is an
unnatural

unnatural distemper, and Greece must be said to be troubled with sedition."

Thirdly, The most eminent of the heathen philosophers not only countenanced, but taught, and were indeed themselves guilty of, the grossest immoralities. The Spartan virtue was the love of glory, yet they were trained up, and exercised, to be expert thieves, and regardless to the affection of nature, towards the objects of our tenderest solicitude, they exposed, or murdered, their weakly and deformed infants. Plato may be charged with patronising falsehood, advising governors to make unbounded use of lying and deceit, for the support of their authority; "This must be permitted (says he) to public governors, but is not allowable in private men." And he is justly blamed for countenancing perjury in love matters; according to Lycurgus's institution, he would have women exposed naked to the eyes of men, and wished to abolish marriage, and institute a community of women, as was practised by Socrates and Cato, who lent their wives to their friends jointly.

Fourthly, "Drunkennes (says Cumberland) is a vice they were greatly addicted to, Seneca pleads for it; Zeno lived in the practice of it, and Chrysippus and several other philosophers died by it. Hercules is celebrated for a great drinker, his cup is proverbial, yet Epictetus styles him a divine man; Cato, a man of great note among the stoics, was guilty of the same vice, but it was not permitted to bring any charge against him, for Seneca
says,

says, " It is easier to make drunkenness a virtue, than to make Cato criminal."

Plutarch informs us that Anacharsis was addicted to this vice, and even Socrates, who is stiled the prince of the heathen philosophical saints, " though not forward to drink at banquets, (says one of his scholars) yet, when he was urged, would outdo them all." And the Greeks praise him extremely, that having spent a whole night drinking for victory with Aristophanes, he was able, at day-break, to delineate and demonstrate a subtle geometrical problem. Montagne, in his essays, says, " Plato forbids young people to drink wine till they are eighteen, but enjoins them to get drunk before they reach forty; and is content to pardon them if they chance to delight themselves with it, and alloweth them to blend the influence of Bacchus largely in their banquets, that good god, who bestoweth chearfulness upon men, and giveth youth unto aged men; who allayeth and assuageth the passions of the mind, even as iron is made flexible by the fire. And in his profitable laws, drinking meetings are looked upon as necessary and commendable, drunkenness being a good and certain trial of every man's nature, and therewithal proper to give aged men the courage to make merry in dancing and music, things allowable and profitable, but such as they dare not undertake when sober and settled." These philosophers held this absurd sentiment, that " the wise man remains safe and unhurt in drink and in melancholy; that his body may be in liquor as to
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all it's senses and powers, yet his mind unprejudiced: that there is a right and prudent use of drunkenness which contributes to virtue, and that it ought not to be extirpated from a well-governed city."—It does not consist with decency, to enlarge upon that worse than brutal gluttony, to which many of the most celebrated in the heathen world devoted themselves. The wealth of nations expended in a single supper, and the stomach frequently relieved of it's load, but to oppress it anew.

Fifthly, Some of these heathen philosophers recommended chastity in an extraordinary manner, forbidding obscene speech, commending chaste eyes, advising men to be pure in heart and deed, but it is certain that in this respect they were equally inconsistent, for simple fornication they not only accounted to be no crime, but almost all the great philosophers were guilty of it. We are told, that Lais, the famous courtesan, used to laugh at the affected gravity of the philosophers, saying, "that more of them were with her than of any other sort of men." Not only so, but almost all these heathen philosophers approved of the gratification of desires, which though against nature, were practised without any disgrace. They prostituted the sacred name of Love, by applying to it this detestable vice. We have too much reason to believe that Socrates himself was addicted to it. Plato taught, that "young soldiers should be gratified in their amours, whether masculine or feminine." We are informed, that "Ticinus changed
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and omitted part of the amorous things in Plato's Charmidies, they being offensive to chaste ears." And when it was objected to Apuleius, that his verses were not becoming a platonic philosopher, he justifies himself by saying, " Plato had no love verses extant but those on the boys, Aster, Alexis, Phædrus, and Dion."

But though the mind revolts from this unnatural subject, disgustingly offensive to the Christian ear, innumerable proofs might be adduced from prophane history, that the practice was neither uncommon nor disgraceful among those venerated sages.

Plutarch has furnished us with many instances, to evince the truth of that frightful picture, which the apostle Paul has given us of those polite nations, the Greeks and Romans, who, " professing themselves wise, became vain in their imaginations, and having changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things, changing the truth of God into a lie; God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies." *Rom. i. 21.*—Indeed drunkenness and debauchery constituted a part of their religion. " The history of their impure Deities, (says Cumberland), incited them to the practice of these vices; their shady groves invited them to perpetrate them; fornication was annexed to their reveling idol, feasts, which was committed in their sacred places, so that the manner of serving their fictitious deities

deities was both horrid and shameful. Witness the Lupercalia, Floralia, Bacchanalia, the usual drunkenness of the women amongst the Romans when they sacrificed to Bona Dea, the infamous intoxication, madness, and antic gestures of Cybele's priests, the rites of Priapus, the worship of their goddess Venus, the Eleusinian mysteries, their unclean fables touching their deities, as well as obscene representation of them by images, both in their temples and houses, so that their religion was not only destitute of truth and righteousness, but a compound of folly, madness, and wickedness. Yet they counted it their glory, calling it *Religio Deorum immortalium*, and because Christians would not join them in these detestable practices, they called them the impious, the setters forth of strange gods, and most severely persecuted them."

This is what the apostle Peter refers to, when writing to the Christians, who were converted from this false religion; he says, "they think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking ill of you. But the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, and abominable idolatries." *1. Pet. iv. 3, 4.*

That this is not a false representation of their principles, is proved, (as before mentioned) by Plutarch; who was one of the priests of Apollo, and who at times speaks highly of the popular religion. He says, "the ridiculous practices of superstition, speeches, gestures, incantations, magical tricks, running about, drummings,

drummings, impure libations, and barbarous and absurd castigation in the temple, give occasion unto some to say, that it were better there were no gods at all, than deities who accept and are pleased with such things as these, of so petulent, so mean, so peevish an humour. Were it not better for the Gauls and Scythians to have no notion at all, no imagination, no history of gods, than to say that there are gods who delight in the blood of sacrificed men, and account it the most perfect and religious service? Had it not been better for the Carthaginians at first to have taken Critias or Diagoras for their law-giver, and to have admitted that there is neither god nor demon, than to make such sacrifices as they do to Saturn?"

Herodotus, (says Stanley), speaking of the worship paid to the moon at Babylon, under the name of Venus, avers, "the Babylonians have an abominable law; every woman of that country must once in her life sit in the temple of Venus, and accompany with a stranger. Some of the richer sort, disdaining to associate with those of ordinary quality, are carried thither in covered chariots, and stand before the temple; others sit in the temple, crowned with garlands. There are also several passages distinguished by cords, which guide strangers to the women. No woman, being once set there, returns home 'till some stranger has cast money into her lap, and taking her aside, lain with her. The money she must not refuse, whatever it be, for it is sacred. Neither may the woman deny any man, but must follow him who first offers her money, without

without any choice on her part." Bayle also, on the authority of Strabo and Lactantius, gives us a melancholy picture of the religious worship of the heathens in general. Speaking of Comana, Strabo says, "there were two cities of the same name, the one in Cappadocia, the other in the kingdom of Pontus; both were dedicated to Bellona, and observed very nearly the same ceremonies. There were six thousand persons, men and women, who were ministers of Bellona, and a great number of lewd women in each city, mostly devoted to the goddesses of the place, which persons used to fight and wound one another every year, on certain festivals of the goddesses." Lactantius, describing their ceremonies, remarks, "from these rites we may judge that the other public ones are no less frantic, as those of Cybele, in which men sacrifice their virility to the goddesses, and those of Fortitude, whom they call Bellona, in which the Priests sacrifice their own blood; for with their shoulders gashed, and flourishing a sword in each hand, they fly up and down like so many madmen!"

Sixthly. To compleat the shocking scene of heathen immorality, it must be added that murder and suicide were not only allowed, but in many instances enjoined. The Spartans, as we have before said, put to death all deformed, delicate, or weak infants, which horrid butchery was commanded by Lycurgus, and approved of by Plutarch. And Aristotle in his politics defends the practice, teaching that children imperfect in their members ought to be exposed; and

and recommending it to women to procure frequent abortions, that the country might not be overstocked with inhabitants; and we may observe, that not a single Greek or Roman author has ever condemned either custom as barbarous or unnatural.

Indeed, their philosophy taught them, that if men are so circumstanced as to be weary of life, "the gate is open; none hath reason to complain, for none is forced to live against his will; if he liveth miserably it is his own fault. Is life your choice? preserve it; are you tired of living? you may return whence you came. Dost thou want bread, (says Epictetus) the door is open, thou mayest go out of a smoaky house?"

Hence suicide was not only practised by several heathen philosophers, but was considered as an heroic action; for when Otho, a Roman emperor, killed himself, Plutarch says, that "His death was as much applauded as his life was censured; for though he lived as prodigal as Nero, he died much more nobly." Pliny asserts, that "the greatest blessing which God has given to many among the punishments of this life is, that they can lay violent hands on themselves." The venerable Seneca, whose morals are so highly extolled, when he was sentenced by Nero to be bled to death, in his seventy third year, prompted his young wife, aged twenty-seven, to accompany him. Indeed, we find that among the Greeks and Romans, instances of self-murder are too numerous to relate. Every difficulty they met with,

seemed superior to their fortitude, and, like cowards, they deserted their post. Brutus and Cassius, so highly esteemed for their virtue, were two of the greatest scholars of the age: let us hear how they reason on this subject. The evening before the decisive battle of Philippi, Brutus thus addressed his friend; “when I was young, Cassius, and inexperienced, I was led, I know not how, into an opinion of philosophy, which made me accuse Cato for killing himself, and represented that action as contrary to piety and true courage; but the situation I am in at present has made me alter my sentiment, so that if heaven do not favor what we now undertake, I am resolved against trying the event of new hopes, and fresh preparations, but will die contented with my fortune. Cassius smiled, and embracing Brutus, said, let us march against the enemy; for either we ourselves shall conquer, or we shall have no cause to fear those who do.” The next day, being defeated in battle by Octavius and Mark Antony, they committed the horrid act of suicide, and, it is said, that Brutus spent his last moments in reproaching virtue; “wretched virtue, (said he) how have I been deceived in serving thee! once I thought thee a substantial good, but now I find thee an empty shadow.”

As they were lavish of their own blood, they were equally ferocious and cruel towards each other. Plutarch, speaking of the Romans, says, “so intirely did rage and resentment stifle in them all sentiments of humanity, as to make it appear that no beast is
more

more savage than man, when possessed with power answerable to his passion." And, treating of Demetrius, of one of the first families in Greece, he declares, " there was but one example of domestic murder in this family; but almost all the other families afford numerous instances of the murder of children, mothers, and wives; and as to the murder of brothers, that was committed without scruple.

CHAP. III.

IN the preceding chapter we behold a melancholy, but true picture, of the shocking immoralities of the heathen world, attended with this painful reflection, that it is not peculiar to wild and barbarous nations, but was the state of the most refined, learned, and civilized people; a state of dreadful ignorance, idolatry, superstition, and immorality. On such a subject it is natural to pause a few moments, and to enquire, Is this the refined morality which is so highly extolled, and recommended to the imitation of the Christian? Is this the age of philosophy? the so much boasted Age of Reason? Does it not rather evince the weakness of the human understanding, and how vain it's efforts are to investigate divine truths? And may it not be justly demanded, what progress, in this respect, had this boasted reason made, during the space of so many ages, and amongst Pagans the most illustrious for their learning, and in the chief of their
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most noted schools? Let Cicero answer the question: "There is nothing so absurd (says he) that has not been advanced by some philosopher:" during four hundred years, says Rollin, "all these great geniuses, so subtle, penetrating, and profound, were incessantly disputing, examining, and dogmatizing, without being able to agree upon any thing." That his charge is just, with respect to truths of the last moment, will evidently appear, by selecting from Stanley and Bayle, a few sentiments of some of the most distinguished characters in every sect of moral philosophers.

"Cicero informs us, that Democritus was eminent for virtue and philosophy: he gives the quality of gods, as well to the images of sensible objects, as to nature, which supplies those images; and asserts that men were generated of water and mud, that the soul is corruptible and perishes with the body: indeed he seems to doubt of all things. I deny, said he, that we know any thing or nothing, I deny whether we even know that; I deny that we know whether any thing exists, or whether nothing exists: Lucian says, he suffered himself to die of hunger.—

"Anaximander was esteemed such a profound philosopher, that Pliny says, he opened the gates of all things;" yet Cicero declares, that "he asserted the gods had a beginning, rising, and vanishing at distant periods. That the first creatures were bred of humidity, and inclosed within sharp thorny barks; but as they grew older, they became drier, and at last the
bark

bark being broken round about them, they lived some little time after it.—

His disciple Anaximenes affirmed, that “the air is God, begotten, immense, infinite, but that those which arise out of it are finite: first was begotten earth, water, fire, then of these all things.—

“Of the gods (says Protagoras) I know nothing, neither that they are, or that they are not; for there are many things which hinder us from this knowledge, besides the blindness and shortness of human life.”

Aristotle, the disciple of Plato, is stiled the prince of philosophers, yet how often does he differ from himself; sometimes declaring, that “the whole divinity consists in intelligence;” sometimes, that “the world is God;” and again, that “God is nothing else but the fire which shines in the heavens.” According to the system of all heathen philosophers he taught, that “matter was an eternal and uncreated being, distinct from the gods,” but he doubted the immortality of the soul.

Strabo, said to be a person of great worth, was called, by way of eminence, the natural philosopher. He asserted, that “that there is no god but nature,” and that “nature is the principle of all productions.”

Theophrastus was said to be exceedingly learned, and to have had two thousand scholars. He ascribes Supreme Divinity, in one place, to intelligence, in another, to heaven, and, after that, to the stars in particular. Cicero says of him, that “on his death-bed, he blamed nature for giving harts and crows so long

long life, that could do no good thereby, and to man, who could so well employ it, so short a one; whereas, if man had been allowed longer time, his life might have been adorned with the perfection of the arts and sciences."

Anaxagoras is stiled one of the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity; he maintained, "that the soul hath a body of the nature of air; that there is a death of the soul, and being in want, he resolved to perish by hunger, till Pericles, one of his scholars, flew to his house, and persuaded him to renounce so melancholy a resolution."

Aristippus, Pyrrho, and many more philosophers of the first eminence, asserted, that "nothing is just, honest, or dishonest in it's own nature; and that the honor and infamy, the justice and injustice of actions, depend solely on human laws."

Chrysippus was stiled an eminent philosopher, ingenious and acute in every thing; he held, that "the gods were perishable, and would actually be consumed in the universal conflagration. He permitted the most abominable incests, and composed several writings full of gross obscenities. Such was the philosopher, says Rollin, who passed for the firm support of the most severe sect in the pagan world!" yet Seneca joins him with Zeno, and says, they "had done greater things in their closets, than if they had filled the first offices of state;" and adds, "I consider them not only as the legislators of a single city, but of all mankind."

Xenocrates,

Xenocrates, a disciple of Plato, was so renowned for wisdom and piety, that "when at any time he went up to the altar to give evidence, the magistrates dispensed with his oath, and after his death, the Athenians decreed him a monument, in token of his virtue and temperance:" yet he asserted, that "there are eight gods; the planets are five of them, and all the fixed stars together, as so many scattered members of the same body make but one. The sun is the seventh, and last of all, the moon." And lest he should be deficient in any of those requisites, which pagan philosophy considered as the ornaments of a great man, we are informed, that "a golden crown was awarded him as the prize he had won at a drinking-bout."

Zeno was the founder of the sect of the Stoics; on account of his wisdom, virtue, and temperance, the Athenians decreed him a crown of gold; to have a tomb built for him, and his statue to be set up in brass. But we must remember how very imperfect their idea of virtue and wisdom were, and we shall not then marvel if we hear of Zeno being "frequently at nightly banquets and plays, at the house of Aristocles the musician, feasting with the drunken king Antigonus." The sum of Zeno's theology is as follows, that the four elements compose the universe; that no other substance exists besides these; that the sun, moon, and all the stars, being bodies of fire, are gods. That which is rational, he argues, is better than that which is irrational; but nothing is better than the world, therefore the world is rational. In like

like manner may be proved, that the world is wise, that it is happy, that it is eternal ; for all these are better than their opposite ; but there is not any thing better than the world, whence it follows that the world is God."—This mighty reasoner, who, the Athenians said, excelled all men, having fallen and broken his finger, unable to support so trifling an accident, hanged himself.

Epicurus is ranked among the most noted philosophers of antiquity. He, as well as many others, asserted, that " the universe is infinite ; composed of innumerable smooth, angular, and hooked atoms, self-moving and eternal : that heaven and earth are made up of them, without any directing power, but merely by chance : that living creatures are generated from slime, or warm earth, as when Nilus forsakes the fields, the husbandman turning up the ground, finds several living creatures, part begun, part imperfect and maimed, besides those that are perfectly formed. What I say of living creatures, I hold also of man, that some little bubbles, as wombs sticking to the roots of the earth, and warmed by the sun, increased in size, and by the operation of nature afforded to infants, sprung from them a continual moisture like milk ; and that those ripened, and brought up to perfection, propagated mankind."

Hence Epicurus ridicules the idea, that the world was made by God, or is governed by a superintending providence ; " for (says he) we must acquit the Divine Power from the solicitude and labor of framing the world,

world, since it could not be a cause blessed and immortal that made it. With what eyes can we look upon the fabric of so great a work, and conceive the world made and built by God? what designs, what tools, what beams, what engines, what ministers in so great a task? How could air, fire, water, earth, obey and serve the will of the architect? Besides, the creating and superintending are troublesome employments, wholly adverse to a happy state."

He also supposes the souls of men and animals to be of the same nature, "consisting of atoms like the rest of the universe, so that when the body is dissolved, the soul itself perishes with the sense." The natural consequences of such sentiments was the doctrine which, according to Cicero, Epicurus held; "I cannot so much as conceive (says he) that there is any good, except what consists in eating, drinking, harmonious sounds to delight the ear, and obscene pleasures."

Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, seem to speak as if they had some conception of the Supreme Being, though far from sufficiently clear in that great truth. The former taught, that "God is a soul diffused into all the beings of nature, and from which all souls are derived. That there are three kinds of intelligences, gods, demons, and heroes. We must, (says he) in worship, prefer gods before demons, heroes before men." In conformity to the popular idolatry, he adored an altar dedicated to Apollo; to give weight to his instructions he pretended that he had descended into hell, where he had seen Homer hanging on a tree,

tree, and surrounded with snakes, as a punishment for what he feigned concerning the gods. His idea of transmigration is truly curious; he boasts of remembering what bodies he had successively inhabited. "He had first been Æthalides the son of Mercury; sometime after he was Euphorbus, and received a mortal wound at the siege of Troy; his soul then passed into the body of Hermotimus, at which time he entered the temple of Apollo, and saw his former buckler eaten up with rust, which Menelaus, on his return from Troy, had consecrated to that God, in token of his victory. He was afterwards a fisherman of Delos, named Pyrrhus, and lastly, Pythagoras."

Empedocles, his scholar, (a person also of great fame as a philosopher) improved on this doctrine of his master; and composed a genealogy of his soul, asserting, that "he had been a girl, a boy, a shrub, a bird, a fish, before he was Empedocles." He affirmed, that "the four elements are divine, and that all things are composed of them." The fire he called Jupiter; the air, Juno; the earth, Pluto; and the water, Neftis.

The writings of Plato abounds with sublime conceptions; but if he held just sentiments of the Supreme Being, he durst not publicly avow them. Plato (says Eusebius) "hath said nothing of the greatest God in his book of laws, nor set down any thing concerning his worship, because what he is, and how to be worshipped, cannot be described;" which is confirmed by Philo, who declares, "Plato hath

bath said nothing concerning the worship of this Deity, because he is incomprehensible both as to name and nature; therefore he proposed only the adoration of heaven to the people, which they thought a more certain religion." And this is perfectly agreeable to Plato's declaration: "The gods (says he) intermingle, not with men, but all the converse and conference between gods and men is performed by demons." And he elsewhere asserts, that "we ought not to be curious to know properly what God is," adding, "the heavens, the stars, the earth, and those to whom the religion of our forefathers ascribed divinity, all these are gods." By what means can such language be made to consist with proper ideas of the Supreme Being? And to suppose that he knew better, but disguised his sentiments, would be a severe impeachment of his integrity.

Socrates was the master and friend of Plato, so that what either of them advanced, may be considered as the echo of the other. He was pronounced by the Delphian oracle to be "The wisest of men, and it is generally imagined that he was sentenced to die, for asserting the unity of the Supreme Being; but this opinion does not seem to be well founded, and Zenophon contradicts it, when he assures us that Socrates declared (with the Pythian oracle) "The gods are to be worshipped according to the law of the city where a man resides," and those who did otherwise, he counted superstitious and vain. Nor indeed does this supposition agree with any part of his conduct,

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from the time of his trial to his death. At his trial, he treated his accusers as bringing a false accusation against him, and addressed his judges in the following manner: "I wonder much, Athenians, how Melitus came by this knowledge, that I do not worship those gods who are worshipped in the city. Others have seen me (and so might Melitus if he had pleased) sacrifice at common festivals, on the public altars." And in a conversation with his friends, after he was condemned, we find him thus consoling himself. "Those who have suborned false witnesses against me, are, doubtless, conscious of equal impiety and injustice; but as for me, what should deject me, being nothing the more guilty? They could not prove I named any new gods, for Jupiter, Juno, or the rest; or that I swore by such." And even when he had drank the hemlock, and his extremities were grown cold, he charged his friend Crito with an idolatrous sacrifice.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THAT "the world by wisdom knew not God," was perhaps never more strikingly exemplified than in the review we have just taken of the absurd ideas of the greatest men in the heathen world; and what a remarkable contrast does the deportment of the Christian form with that of the philosopher, on a similar occasion. The apostle Paul was arraigned at the same tribunal which condemned Socrates, as "*a setter forth of strange gods!*" When, far from imitating the philosopher in acknowledging their false gods, he bore a noble testimony against them, and, in a manly address to his judges and hearers, replete with elegance and sublimity, he called their attention to the most important truths. "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *To the unknown God*. Whom ye therefore ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you: God that made the world and all things therein,

therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with mens hands, as though he needeth any thing, seeing he giveth to all, life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, and hath determined the bounds of their habitations, that they should seek the Lord if haply they might find him: though he be not far from any of us, for in him we live and move, and have our being. Forasmuch then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." I have given the entire passage, as thinking it beautiful beyond expression, and rich with those interesting truths in which all mankind are deeply concerned. We have, in this concise discourse, the first cause, the creator of the universe pointed out to us, "*God that made the world, who is Lord of all;*" His omnipresence, "*he is nigh to every one of us;*" our relation to him, "*we are his offspring, in him we live and move, and have our being;*" our relation to each other, "*He hath made of one blood all nations of men;*" his superintending providence over all his works, "*He hath appointed the bounds of our habitations;*" the duty of all who have departed from their love and allegiance to God, "*That they should repent and seek the Lord, if haply they*

they may find him ;" and, lastly, the immortality of the soul, and a state of future reward and punishment, "*He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world.*"

With what eyes did the author of the Age of Reason read this incomparable address, and maintain, as he ignorantly and unjustly has done, " I recollect not a single passage in the writings of the men called the apostles, that conveys any idea of what God is." This dogmatical assertion, reminds us of what is reported about Zeno and Diogenes ; the former having absurdly affirmed, that there was no such thing as local motion ; the latter walking backward and forward several times, said, " I am refuting Zeno !"

Nor is this the only instance in which he discovers a superficial knowledge of, and a deeply rooted prejudice against, the Scriptures, which we must conclude, he only read to cavil at ; wherefore, rejecting divine revelation, he substitutes in it's place, a philosophic contemplation of the universe, which he styles, "*the word of God.*" " The word of God (says he) is the Creation : it is only in the creation that all our conceptions of a word of God can unite, and this word of God reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God. Do we want to contemplate his power ; we see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom ; we see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed : in fine, do we want to know what God is ; search not the book called the Scriptures, but

but the scriptures called the Creation; let a man believe this, and he will live more consistently and morally than by any other system!!!

Having, in the foregoing pages, taken a view of the heathen world in general, and of it's wisest and most learned philosophers in particular, do we find that they lived "more consistently and morally than the Christians?" Did they, by viewing the creation, "find out what God is, and all that is necessary to know of him?" Have we not, on the contrary, seen many of them rejecting the belief of any God? Numbers of them worshipping the host of heaven, yea, stocks and stones? We have not an instance, where the most illustrious among them abstained from frequenting their temples, or hesitated at conforming to the popular worship. Some we find ascribing the origin of the universe to chance; others declaring, that they saw no traces of wisdom or goodness in it; that it was so wretched it could only be a place of punishment for crimes committed in a pre-existent state; and have we not seen their most distinguished characters guilty of abominable vices, while some of them, like Diogenes, were so obscene in their language, and beastly in their demeanor, that a repetition thereof would wound the chaste ear?

One would almost conclude, that the author of the Age of Reason, was as little conversant with profane history, as he appears to be with the scriptures. Did he never read the affecting complaint of Cicero? who says, "Nature gives many indications of her will, but

we are deaf, I know not how, and hear not her voice. Nature hath afforded us some small sparks, which we so quickly extinguish by evil habits and false opinions, that the light of nature no where appears. We seem not only blind, with respect to wisdom, but dull and stupid as to those very things which, in some measure, we seem to see. I wish I could as easily find out the truth, as discover error." That the truth he was in a state of uncertainty about was of the greatest moment, is very evident, for he says, "truly the constant dissention of the most learned men, in an affair of such deep importance, *the nature of the gods*, will stagger even those who before thought that they had arrived at certainty." And, according to his own confession, after having, with great industry and ingenuity, collected and stated the strongest arguments he could find in favor of the immortality of the soul, he makes this candid declaration. "After following probable conjecture, I cannot tell how to advance farther. Which opinion is true, the gods only know. It even becomes a question, which is the most probable. Let those be positive who can, where so much is involved in obscurity, I know not how it is; whilst I read, I assent; when I have laid aside my book, and begin again to meditate upon the immortality of the soul, all assent vanishes." Pursuing the same subject, he further expresses himself: "If, in the opinion of all philosophers, no one has attained wisdom, we, for whose welfare you pretend the immortal gods have made the best provision, are in a wretched state, for as it matters
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not whether a man *does not* enjoy his health, or *cannot* enjoy it, so I do not see it is of any consequence whether no man *is* wise, or no man *can be made* so." It was but a few pages back, when writing on the same matter, he said, " If I err in believing the immortality of the soul, I err willingly, nor whilst I live, shall that error, wherein I delight, be wrested from me." Indeed, notwithstanding their profound researches, these philosophers were so far from arriving at certainty, that their weightiest arguments seem founded on pure conjecture. Thus Seneca, treating of the immortality of the soul, declares, " I easily believed the opinion of great men, rather promising than proving this delightful hope." And Cicero assures us, that this was the state of the heathen philosophers in general; for, speaking of Arcefilaus, who was celebrated, not only for learning, but for his liberality to the poor, he says, " Arcefilaus maintained both sides of the question, and determined nothing, being led to this by that obscurity of things which had brought Socrates, and almost all the philosophers, to a confession of their own ignorance, that nothing could be understood, nothing perceived, nothing known. That all the senses are narrow, our minds weak, our lives short, and truth drowned in an abyss. That all things are held by opinion and institution, nothing left to truth; and, finally, that all things are involved in darkness."

Plato too confirms this account, for, in his apology for his master Socrates, he relates a conference between

him and one of his scholars, which fully discovers the great uncertainty they were in respecting the worship most acceptable to God. Socrates having advised his scholar to "wait with patience till that time should arrive, when he might learn with certainty how to behave towards God and man;" the scholar answered, "When will that time come, and who will teach us this?" "It is one (said Socrates) who has now a concern for you: but as Homer relates that Minerva removed the mist from the eyes of Diomedes, so it is necessary that the mist which is now before your mind, be first taken away." The scholar, wishing this to be soon, replies, "it is then best to forbear from sacrificing till the person appears;" to which Socrates answered, "you judge very well, it will be much safer so to do, than to run a hazard of offering sacrifices, while you know not whether they are acceptable to God or no."

It was this state of anxious uncertainty amongst the most eminent philosophers, which gave rise to a new, but numerous sect, the Sceptics, who professed to doubt of all things. The apology they make for themselves, as given by Stanley, exhibits a melancholy picture of the benighted state of their own minds, and a lamentable view of the general condition of the heathen world.

"Concerning devotion and the gods, (say they) there is much controversy: the greater part hold, that there are gods, but some that there are none. Of those who affirm there are gods, some worship the
gods

gods of their own country, others those which the sects of dogmatists have framed, as Aristotle, who held God to be the boundary of heaven; the Stoics, who say he is a spirit, penetrating through things horrible; Epicurus, who says he is of human form; Zenophanes, that he is an impassable sphere. Some hold that he is provident over our affairs, others that he is regardless of them; some say, there are many gods, and of different forms, running into the opinions of the Egyptians, who conceived the gods to be faced like dogs, crocodiles, and what not. Whence arose contrary opinions as to sacrifice, and the worship of the gods; things held sacred in some temples, were profane in others: for example, none sacrifice a swine to Serapis, but to Hercules and Æsculapius they do; it is unlawful to sacrifice a sheep to Isis, but to the mother of the gods, and to other divinities also, it is lawful. In Alexandria, they sacrifice a cat to Hero, a moth to Thetis, to Neptune a horse, whilst to Apollo this creature is abominable. The Stoics hold it impious to defile an altar with blood, but the Lacedemonians whip themselves cruelly at the altar of Orthosia and Diana, so as that much blood runs down upon it. Some sacrifice men to Saturn, and the Scythians, immolate strangers to Diana. To eat man's flesh with us is unlawful, whereas whole nations use it as a thing indifferent, and the Stoics say, it is not unfitting to eat not only the flesh of other men, but even our own. They also hold it indecent to marry their mother or sister, whilst the magi, who make the
greatest

greatest profession of wisdom, marry their mothers, and the Egyptians their sisters. Chrysippus, in his treatise of policy, asserts, that the father may lie with the daughter, and the mother with the son. And Plato more universally contends, that all wives should be in common. With us, children are bound to take care of their parents; but the Scythians, when theirs exceed threescore years, cut their throats: and Solon, the Athenian, made a law, whereby any man was permitted to kill his son. To rob, with us, is held unlawful, the Cilicians esteem it honorable; nor can those, who say Mercury is a thievish god, conceive it to be unjust, for how can a god be wicked?" Struck with this diversity of sentiment which prevailed in different nations upon the most important subjects, they at length advanced, that all kinds of worship, and indeed all actions, were equally indifferent, judging, that "if there was any sacrifice, pious or impious in it's own nature, or if there were any things unlawful by nature, all persons would have the same opinion of them."

Thus we may perceive that these heathen philosophers, men of undoubted wisdom and learning, were in a degree sensible of the weakness and corruption of our nature, confessing the uncertainty of human reason in divine things; yet do our modern deists, though indebted chiefly to divine revelation for the knowledge they possess, cry up natural religion, and the light of reason, rejecting revelation, not only as useless, but baneful in it's influence. For if we are to credit the
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bold, but unsupported charge of the author of the Age of Reason, "The age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system."

How this last assertion can be reconciled with what he immediately adds, is not a little difficult to conceive, "The reformation by Luther was an event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther, or those that are called reformers, the sciences began to revive, and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear."

This really seems a paradox; for from his ascribing the most pernicious consequences as resulting from the Christian system, and the most salutary effects from the reformation, we should be led to imagine, that either they were directly opposed to each other, that the author did not understand what the reformation was, or (which is most likely) that his prejudices against the Christian religion, prevented him from adverting to the absurdity of assertions which so palpably contradict each other. The reformation principally consisted in removing a number of superstitious doctrines, ceremonies, and practices, which the weakness, or wickedness, of men had added to the Christian system, and by translating the scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and enjoining all people to a frequent perusal of them, the Christian religion was in a considerable degree restored to its primitive simplicity; one natural effect of which was, "breaking the long chain
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of despotic ignorance to the revival of the sciences, &c."

Equally unjust is his assertion, that "revelation holds it irreligious to study and contemplate the structure of that universe which God has made." He should have proved where revelation says so; but as he has not, and indeed could not do that, it is easy to shew how far the reverse of what he has asserted is the truth. The scriptures lead us to a religious contemplation of the works of the Supreme Being, assuring us, that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." Psalm xix. 1. Exciting us to the most profound adoration of the divine majesty, furnishing us with these sublime ideas, and this emphatic language; "When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon, and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man that thou thus visitest him? O Lord! our Lord! how excellent is thy name in all the earth," Psalm viii. 3. 9.

These are the sublime sentiments which revelation presents us with, while many of the ancient philosophers, as well as some of our modern deists, have been so far from discovering the finger of God in the creation, that they have profanely declared, "If the world were the work of God, it would bring on it's author as many reproaches, as there might be perfections in it." Such was the reasoning of Bayle, Spinoza, and Descartes.

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It is rare to find an author, who so roundly and boldly affirms every thing, without so much as offering the shadow of proof.—“Mystery (says he) is the antagonist of truth, truth never envelopes itself in mystery,” but how does this agree with what he immediately after asserts; “Every thing we behold is a mystery, our own existence is a mystery, the whole vegetable world is a mystery.” Now if mystery be incompatible with *true* religion, must it not follow, that mystery is also incompatible with *true* philosophy? so that according to his mode of asserting things at random, there is no more truth in our own existence, in the vegetable world, or in any thing we behold, than in those mysteries for which he so unjustly decries revealed religion.

Here it may naturally be asked, if mystery be admitted in the physical and moral world, why it must have no place in religion, which has for it's object truths the most mysterious? Is the belief in an eternal, self-existing, omniscient, and omnipresent Being, less mysterious than our own existence? So far is what a celebrated author has advanced from being true, that “where mystery begins, religion ends;” that if we mean by mystery what the Greek word imports, *μυστήριον*, *res arcana*, “something above human intelligence,” all religion, whether revealed or what is termed natural, must begin in mystery. The fundamental article of all religion, the belief in a first cause, and his divine attributes, being incomprehensible to a finite understanding, is as great a mystery
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to us, as any article to which the Christian subscribes. The divine preſcience reconciled to man's free will ; the ſuperintendence of divine providence over the creation ; the Chriſtian doctrine of a reſurrection, (which the author of the Age of Reaſon profeſſes to believe, though it cannot be accounted for upon any philoſophical principle,) are all myſteries which we receive on the authority of divine revelation. But it is among his numerous inconfiſtencies, that he acknowledges the belief of a God to be myſterious, and yet ridicules the idea of there being any myſtery in religion.

Not leſs abſurd is what the ſame author aſſerts reſpecting miracles, when he declares, “ of all modes of evidence that ever were invented to obtain belief of any ſyſtem of opinion, that of miracles is the moſt inconfiſtent.” As this is a bare aſſertion without proof, it may be ſufficient to oppoſe to it, that the wiſeſt and beſt men have held the very reverſe. His definition of miracles is, however, curious, “ The elephant, (ſays he) though larger, is not a greater miracle than the mite ; nor a mountain a greater miracle than an atom.” According to the learned doctor Clarke's definition, theſe are not miracles at all ; a miracle he defines to be, “ a work effected in a manner different from the common and regular method of providence. It is at leaſt as great an act of power to make the ſun move at all, as to cauſe it to ſtand ſtill, yet this latter we call a miracle, the former not.” But ſuppoſe any one ſhould infer from theſe things which he ſtiles miracles, “ the elephant, the mite, the mountain, and
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the atom, that he who formed them is infinite in wisdom and power; it is easy to do away such an inference, by asserting, that “of all modes of evidence that ever were invented to obtain belief of any system or opinion, that of miracles is the most inconsistent.”

The prediction of future events may, very properly, be defined a miracle, I think it must be granted, that the accomplishment of such a prediction would fully justify every unprejudiced man, in concluding the mission of the prophet to be divine. But such inferences cannot be conclusive with, nor will the author of the Age of Reason admit them, for “of all modes of evidence ever invented, miracles (he says) are the most inconsistent.”

His ideas of prophecy, and of the greater and lesser prophets, with which he diverts himself, and from his manner of writing, we may conclude, expects his readers will be greatly edified, is really curious. It reminds us of a blind man, who, in attempting to define colors, said they were like the sound of a drum: so this gentleman, totally ignorant that by the greater and lesser prophets, we only mean the extent or quantity of their writings, without any reference to the matter, annexes his own crude idea to the terms, and then triumphs in refuting an error, which originated with himself: as those who employ the words greater and lesser prophets, if they are not ignorant indeed, only understand by them, that Isaiah wrote fifty times as much as Obadiah; Jeremiah forty times as much as Malachi, &c.

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His acknowledgement that he had no Bible, and that he had not lately read in one, is needless, as almost every page of his work gives us this information; and at the same time marks the precipitate conduct of the man, who rudely attacks a book, which for ages has been venerated by the wisest and best men, and which he confesses he has not lately read; this may account for his rash, illiberal and splenetic assertion, "that all things called prophecies, in the book *called* the Bible, were related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard them; and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen hereafter."

To those who have but a superficial knowledge of the scriptures, as well to those who take things upon trust, or who cannot distinguish between sound reasoning and a bold unsupported charge, this mode of affirming every thing will pass for demonstration. But the sober enquirer after truth will not be satisfied with the mere "ipse dixit" of any man; and that we ought not to place too great dependance on every thing this author advances, has already appeared, and will, I expect, be seen more evidently, by selecting a few out of the numerous prophecies with which the sacred scriptures abound, and leaving the reader to decide whether he has done them justice in affirming that "they are so loose and obscure as to be out of the comprehension of those who heard them, and so equivocal as to fit any circumstance that might happen."

First.—Both Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the total
destruction

destruction of Babylon, many years before the event took place " I will stir up (saith the Lord) the Medes against them, and Babylon the glory of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation, neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their folds there ; but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and the wild beasts of the island shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction". *Isa.* 13, 19. Jeremiah says " and it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the King of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the King of Assyria". *Jer.* 50. 18. " The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burnt with fire : and they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for a foundation, but thou shalt be desolate for ever". Chap. 51, 26.

Can any thing be more clear and explicit than these prophecies, foretelling the destruction of a city which was called one of the wonders of the world, and which, humanly speaking, promised to continue for ever? in this sense must we understand Isaiah, who beheld her vainly glorying in the mightiness of her power, and in that eternal duration which all things seemed to assure her of, saying " I shall be a lady for ever ; I *am*, and
none

none else beside me ; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of Children". *If.* 47, 7, 8.

Heathen authors give a most extraordinary account of Babylon : its walls being of an astonishing height, and so broad that six chariots could pass abreast on them ; such a city as this, one would suppose was in no danger of becoming wholly destitute of inhabitants ; but the prophets predicted " the time when, and by whom it should be taken ; its been changed into a retreat of wild animals ; its entire destruction, the place being covered by water ; and finally that it never should again be inhabited. It was accordingly besieged by the united forces of the Medes and Persians, under Cyrus the nephew and son-in-law of the King of the Medes, who turning the course of the river Euphrates which ran through the City, the channel was left dry for his soldiers to pass, by which means Babylon was taken, which otherwise was perhaps impregnable. He then ordered the outer walls to be razed down, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah " the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken."

Alexander purposed to have made Babylon the seat of his empire, and Newton, on the authority of Quintus Curtius, says, he actually set men at work to rebuild the temple of Belus, repair the banks of the river, and bring back the waters into their old channel, but its destruction was predetermined by the King of Kings, so that after meeting with some difficulties in the

the work, death put an end to this and all his other projects.—" Diodorus Siculus describes the buildings as ruined in his time; Strabo some time after says, " the great city is become a great desert." In the second century Pausanias writes " Babylon once the finest city the sun ever shone on, is now a heap of ruins." In Jerome's time it was converted into a chace, to keep wild beasts in for the diversion of the later kings of Persia. Reauwolf, a German, (who was on the spot a few centuries back) speaks of " the remains of a castle, so full of scorpions, serpents, and other dreaded animals, that no one dared approach it;" and later travellers inform us, " the waters of the Euphrates have so covered the place, that its situation can no longer be ascertained."

Secondly. The prophecies concerning Egypt, are equally remarkable, Egypt was justly stiled the corrupter of the world, the source of idolatry and superstition, and degenerated at last to such monstrous and beastly worship, as disgraced humanity: therefore, " thus saith the Lord God, I will make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, *Ezek.* xxx. 10. He shall break the images, and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire, *Jeremiah* xlii. 13. And it shall be the basest of kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations, for I will diminish them that they shall no more rule over the nations, *Ex.* xxix. 15. And there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, xxx. 13."

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It may justly be asked, is there any thing in these predictions, "so loose and obscure as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard them, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen?" Can words more fully and explicitly point out the subjection of Egypt to a foreign power; it's present abject condition; and that it should never more be governed by a king of it's own?

And these predictions are the more remarkable, because the most important parts of them are still fulfilling. For considerably more than two thousand years this beautiful country has been under a strange government. It was first subdued by Nebuchadrezzar, it afterwards passed into the hands of the Persians. When the Persian empire was overthrown, it fell under the dominion of Alexander, after whose death it became the portion of his general Ptolemy, and descended, by something like regular succession, to Cleopatra; from whom it was wrested by the Romans. At the final subversion of the Eastern empire, it was ravaged and possessed by the Saracens, and is at this day, one of the finest tributary provinces of the Turks, who fulfil the sacred prediction, by ruling with an iron sceptre the basest of nations. The judicious Thevenot gives them the following character: "the people of Egypt (generally speaking) are swarthy, exceedingly wicked, great rogues, cowardly, lazy, hypocrites, Sodomites, treacherous, and so greedy of money, that they will kill a man for a maidin or three halfpence,

Thirdly.

Thirdly. We may connect the prophecies of Moses with the prediction of our Savior Jesus Christ, as they relate to the same events, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. Moses, a little before his decease, addressed them in the following remarkable manner: "I know, that after my death, ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and evil will befall you." *Deut.* xxxi. 29. "And the Lord shall bring a fierce nation against thee, whose tongue thou shalt not understand; and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates wherein thou trustest, throughout all thy land, until thy high and fenced walls come down; and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, in the siege, and in the straits wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee. *Deut.* xxviii. 52. And thou shalt be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it; and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. verse 64. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye word among all nations, ver. 37. The fruit of the land and thy labors, shall a nation which thou knowest not, eat, and thou shalt be oppressed and crushed away. ver. 33. And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, and thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, then the Lord will have compassion, and gather thee from among all nations whither the Lord hath scattered thee: and the Lord thy God will bring

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thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it," chap. xxx. 1, 2, 3. "And as Jesus went out of the temple, one of his disciples said unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here! and Jesus answering said unto him, seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down, (adding) in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation unto this time." *Mark* xiii. 1, 2, 19. And when his disciples inquired, "when shall these things be?" he replied, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." *Luke* xxi. 32. These predictions are of the most extraordinary nature, as they treat not of a single, but of several important events; should the author of the *Age of Reason* read them (which I suppose he has never done), he must blush for his unjust censure, as he will not find a sentence in these prophecies related in such a "loose and obscure manner, as to be out of the comprehension" of almost the meanest capacity; much less are they "so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen hereafter." And as they exhibit a lively picture of the present state of the Jews, it may be proper to consider a few of the leading features of them.

First. Moses foretold, that after his death the Jews would corrupt themselves; their own history of the kings of Israel and Judah, as well as all their prophets, inform us how dreadfully they were corrupted.

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“ For they did evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoked him by their sins, which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. They built them high places, and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were Sodomites in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations around them.” *1 Kings xiv. 29.*

Secondly. In consequence of their rebellion against God, it was foretold by Moses, “ The Lord shall bring a fierce nation, who shall besiege thee in all thy gates, till thy high and fenced walls come down.” Such were the Chaldeans, and Assyrians, who at different times besieged and took their cities. But this part of the prediction had it's complete accomplishment, when the Romans demolished their fortified places, and (as Josephus informs us) “ slew all, shewing mercy to no age or sex, out of the hatred they bore to the nation.”

Thirdly. In these sieges it was predicted, that “ their sufferings should be great, in the straitness wherewith their enemies should distress them.” This was often the case; when the king of Assyria besieged Samaria, there was a dreadful famine; and when Nebuchadrezzar besieged, took, and spoiled Jerusalem, “ the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.” *2 Kings xxv. 3.* But the distress in the last siege of Jerusalem by the sword, famine, and pestilence, may be truly said,

according to our Savior's prediction, to be "such as was not from the beginning of the creation. Josephus's account of it almost chills the soul. He informs us, that "the famine raged so dreadfully, that the miserable mother not only snatched the food out of her husband's mouth, but also from her infants;" and that "a noblewoman killed and eat her own child!" "The story (says he) is not to be heard or reported without horror." Yet Moses predicted, "The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not set the soles of her feet on the ground for delicateness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her children; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the sieges and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in all thy gates." So that what with the horrible slaughter committed by the Romans; the dreadful civil war that raged in the city, and their awful attendants the famine and pestilence, Josephus informs us, that "eleven hundred thousand perished, and ninety-seven thousand were made prisoners, and sold for slaves!"

Fourthly. The temple was to be destroyed; "one stone shall not be left upon another." Josephus asserts, that "Titus did all that could be done to prevent its destruction; but his soldiers set fire to it, in despite of whatever he could do to deter them." And that after it was burnt, Titus ordered his soldiers to "lay the temple level with the ground;" which order was punctually executed, and the place laid so flat, that it looked as though it had never been.

Fifthly.

Fifthly. They were to be dispersed into all nations; "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people." Every nation is a witness to the truth of this part of the prophecy, for what nation is a stranger to this people?

Sixthly. In this dispersed state it was predicted, "thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, and thy life shall hang in doubt, and thou shalt be oppressed and crushed away." How singularly has this been fulfilled! there is hardly a country but they have been banished from, and recalled, and again banished; their property confiscated, and thousands of them massacred.

Seventhly. Their present situation is exactly foretold; "and thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-word among all nations." Is not this part of the prophecy daily fulfilling before our eyes? This people are known by their countenances; and the usury, hard-heartedness, and avarice of a Jew, is become proverbial; and, in many respects, they are cruelly and unjustly treated, as if they were indeed of another species.

Eighthly. But the most wonderful circumstance is, that notwithstanding they have been in this dispersed, despised, and afflicted situation, they have yet subsisted for more than seventeen hundred years a distinct people; what a standing miracle is here! Is there any thing equal to it in the history of all the nations under the sun; and they will continue living monuments of the truth of the scripture prophecies, till they have

have their full accomplishment; when “ the Lord will have compassion, and gather them from all nations whither the Lord hath scattered them, and will bring them into the land which their fathers possessed.”

In vain does the author of the Age of Reason assert, that “ Moses never wrote the books ascribed to him.” Even granting this to be true, for which we have, as usual, but his bare word, it does not invalidate the truth of these predictions, whoever was the predictor, as they are now fulfilling before our eyes.

That Moses could not be the penman of them, because the last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy treats of his death, is absurd to the last degree, and is one of those quibbles for which this author has a peculiar talent, which take wonderfully with the ignorant, but are despised by men of sound understanding. Joshua, who was the friend and companion of Moses in all their travels, is generally supposed to have written that chapter, and added it to the book. Nor is this an uncommon case; a traveller dies on his journey; his companion publishes his journal, and adds some circumstances of his death: to assert from this, that the entire is a forgery, would be highly absurd. On the whole, it does not admit of a doubt, that more than 1700 years back it was foretold, that Babylon should be desolate, never to be rebuilt or inhabited, that there should be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, and that the Jews should be scattered among all the nations of the earth, where they shall be an astonishment

nishment, a proverb, and a bye-word, and yet remain a distinct people. And these things, predicted so many ages ago, have been partly fulfilled in latter times, and are fulfilling at this very hour; so that the Deist may as well attempt to restore Babylon to it's antient splendor, crown a king of Egyptian extraction at Cairo, and incorporate the Jews with the several nations among whom they are dispersed, as invalidate the truth of these prophecies.

Indeed, the author of the Age of Reason has not only discovered a deeply-rooted prejudice against the prophecies, but also against every thing in the book which contains them; for he declares, "did the book called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas, and expression, all the books now extant in the world, I would not take it for the rule of my faith."

This determination appears highly extravagant, and strongly expressive of a prejudiced mind; for if this book excelled all human compositions, there would be just cause for concluding it divine; and that the Bible does excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books that are now extant in the world, has been invariably attested by the wise, the learned, and the good. That it has been subject to the impotent attacks of libertines in every age, is a proof of it's purity; and it carries internal evidence of it's divine origin in a great variety of particulars.

First. In the prediction of future events, with which the scriptures abound, and which can only be known
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to the Most High, and those to whom, in his infinite wisdom, he is pleased to impart them.

Secondly. In clearly discovering those important truths, in which all mankind are deeply interested; giving us just conceptions of the Supreme Being, the creation of the world, the fall of man, and the evils consequent thereon; the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, and the way to divine favor through a Redeemer; the worship most acceptable to God, the immortality of the soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments.

Thirdly. The internal proof that the scripture is of divine origin, consists more especially in the purity of it's precepts; human laws can reach only the outward act; the divine precept takes cognizance of, and prohibits the first motion in the mind towards evil. "Thou shalt not covet." "He that is angry with his brother is a murderer." And it enjoins such a disposition of mind towards our neighbor, as not only places us at the remotest distance from injuring him, but disposes to every kind act. It's language is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets." *Matt. vii. 12.* Nor does it stop here; Christian morals having their foundation in super-human philanthropy, are raised to the summit of perfection; "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

And here let me be permitted to bring in evidence
that

that hero of the Age of Reason, Trajan, the greatest and most benevolent of the emperors, whose virtue was proverbial, *As fortunate as Augustus, as virtuous as Trajan*: did he “*love his neighbor as himself*.” “He gave games (says count Stolberg) for one hundred and twenty days successively, to one hundred thousand spectators, in which were exposed ten thousand gladiators.” *His equals in the eye of Reason*, hunting out each others lives for the sport of a barbarous people; who “when a gladiator received his death-wound, expressed their joy by wild shouts; and if he seemed sensible of pain, or asked for life, ferociously exclaimed, kill, burn, whip him.” What an entertainment for priests and senators; vestals and matrons! yet is the Christian called from the mild and benevolent doctrines of his divine master, to pollute himself by associating with the admirers of a people who could practise, and an age that could tolerate enormities such as these.

It is rather remarkable, that notwithstanding the absurd fictions of the antients, who represented their deities as perpetrators of the most shameful and horrid actions, there seem to have been preserved in most nations, some uncertain traditions of the great religious truths. Their chaos, from which they suppose arose not only the universe, but also their gods celestial and terrestrial, had a manifest allusion to the Mosaic account of the creation. They were not without some idea of the fall of angels, hence the giants, and Typhon their champion, who having rebelled against Jupiter,
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and being overcome, was buried under Mount Ætna. They had some notion of the fall of man, hence their golden age degenerating into one of silver : the destructive deluge, caused by the sins of the world, was not forgotten by them, hence their fable of Deucalion's flood, and of the world being re-peopled by following the miraculous injunction of an oracle. They had much display of religious worship, and practised rites and ceremonies similar to some among the Jews, but blended with the grossest idolatry. Their fancied Elysium, and dreadful pit of Tartarus, shew that they were not wholly strangers to the doctrine of future rewards and punishments ; but the whole seems more like poetic fiction than reality.

The Christian will say, these absurd fables, so full of error, cannot be of divine origin, and the Deist will hardly acknowledge them as springing from the light of nature. If they are not from either of these sources, they must owe their existence to tradition, being so many revealed truths, which by length of time, and passing through impure channels, have become disgraced and corrupted ; so that when we compare the benighted state of the heathen world with the glorious light of the gospel dispensation, we see the truth of our Saviour's remark, " the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." *Matt. iv. 16.*

The Deist, though he ungratefully rejects revelation, is indebted to it for what knowledge he has of
divine

divine truths, which, because they are familiar to him, he rashly asserts to be discoverable by the light of nature. But this is only taking things for granted; and it may be proper to enquire, what ideas we have affixed to these expressions, "the light of nature, and natural religion." If we have just ideas when we employ these terms, we must apply them to man, excluded from society, destitute of instruction, tradition, and revelation. To affirm, that man thus situated, is by the powers of his own mind, equal to the discovery of those important truths revealed to us, is unsupported by the color of proof. It can at best be but conjectured, and this even is done away by the confession, which the most acute, learned, and virtuous of the heathen philosophers, make of their own ignorance in divine truths. As to natural religion, which the Deist connects with the light of nature, and asserts to be inherent in man, it must at least consist in adoration of the Supreme Being, and obedience to his will. But this pre-supposes a knowledge of him, and of his divine perfections, the relation we stand in to him, and what he requires of us. The whole of which must be independent of revelation, tradition, or any instruction, to constitute the light of nature, and natural religion. Here again all is conjecture, unless we may infer any thing from the practices of different nations, which history furnishes us with a relation of. But this by no means favors the deistical position, for if we may form a judgment, or draw any conclusion, from the accounts handed down to us in both sacred and

and profane history, of the proneness of almost every nation to idolatry, we should be ready to infer that idolatry is the religion of nature; but perhaps the supposition is more just, that fallen man, left wholly to himself, destitute of revelation, tradition, and instruction, would be as great a stranger to any religion, as he would be to any language. Deprived of these unspeakable mercies, and excluded from society, he would resemble the picture given us in the sacred writings: "vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt. *Job ii. 12.*"

If we imitate the author of the Age of Reason, we may roundly and confidentially assert *any thing*. "It is very certain (says he) that in one point, all nations of the earth agree, all believe in God."

I wish not to copy this author in the use of harsh epithets, yet can hardly forbear saying, his assertion, "all nations of the earth agree, all believe in God," is made up of art and falsehood. "All believe in God," artful enough! but the question is, what kind of God did all nations of the earth believe in, before the promulgation of the gospel? did any nation (except the Jews) believe in the true God? might they not all have adopted the language of Pharaoh king of Egypt, "I know not Jehovah, the Lord." Most nations of the earth believed in a God, or rather in a plurality of gods; the sun, moon, planets, and world; heroes, beasts, fishes, and reptiles; images of gold, silver, wood, and stone; some nations believed in two principles, a good and evil one, who were eternally

nally counteracting each other; to the evil one they sacrificed and prayed, as well as to the good, to deprecate the mischief he might do them. We have abundance of heathen authorities, that there were even nations who did not acknowledge any God! and several eminent philosophers were of the same mind. But we need not go so far back, since it is little more than two centuries that John de Leri, and other ministers from Geneva, visited Brasil, and published an account of their voyage, in which they say, "The Brasilians do not distinguish good from evil, and even those vices which other nations condemn, are by them looked upon as virtues, or at least they have no notion of the deformity of vice, so that in this respect they differ but little from brutes. But what is most pernicious, they do not know whether there be a God or no, so far are they from admiring his power and goodness." If we may credit late travellers, who have paid particular attention to the Hottentots, they are equally strangers to any idea of God, nor have they the least trace of religious worship! Vailant, in his new travels to the interior parts of Africa, speaking of the greater Nimiquas, says, "As to religion, divine worship, priests, temples, and the idea of an immortal soul, they are all nonentities to them; of these subjects, like all the rest of the savages their neighbors, they have not the slightest notion."

If we look to the great Peruvian and Mexican empires, which were in a high state of civilization when discovered by the Spaniards, may we not say of them

as Plutarch said of the Carthaginians, Had it not been better for them to have supposed, that there was neither God nor Demon, than to have sacrificed twenty thousand men to their cruel deities?

Indeed this author's ideas of what is necessary to be known of God, are very confined, the whole being resolved into a knowledge of his power and wisdom: we bow with him before the power and wisdom of the Creator; but would it not conduce to the happiness of mankind, to know also that God is good? that as the world was formed by him, he still graciously superintends the work of his hands? that he is not an indifferent spectator of the actions of men, but mercifully regards those who love and reverence him? and that there will be a future state of rewards and punishments? If this author has learned these very important truths, from "*his word of God*," as he styles the creation, he must be more clear-sighted than the profoundest philosophers; for they, with the same book in their hands, which they studied with unremitting attention and diligence, made no such discoveries: nor can I see how it is possible for the deist, rejecting divine revelation, and the doctrine of the fall of man, to have any just conception of the true God. The acute philosopher, whose penetrating eye no imperfection in outward nature can escape, has frequently asserted, that there are still greater disorders in the moral world; that there is more misery than happiness in it; and ignorant of the doctrine of the fall, and therefore unable to reconcile the present irregular

regular state of things, with even his ideas of almighty goodness, has presumed to infer, "It cannot be a cause blessed and immortal that made the world." It may be answered, that though there are imperfections in nature, and though man is subject to sickness, pain, and death, yet there is such a wonderful display of power and wisdom, as evidently demonstrates that there must have been a first creating cause, that universal nature could not be the work of chance. But this does not remove the doubt; for if the heathen philosopher could not reconcile the imperfections and misery which he observed in the world, with his limited conception of the wisdom and goodness of his gods, how much greater difficulties have we to struggle with, while believing in the infinite perfections of the Supreme Being, we see so much both of moral and physical irregularity around us. Revelation is the clue which alone can guide us through this labyrinth, assuring us, that when the work of creation was finished, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." *Gen. i. 31.* "But by man sin entered into the world, and death by him." *Rom. v. 12.* Now we must believe these doctrines, which are consonant to every conception we ought to have of the Supreme Being, or rejecting them, we must either subscribe to the absurd doctrine of a fortuitous assemblage of dancing atoms forming the world, or impute the misery and imperfection which we feel and see, to a Being of infinite power and goodness.

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Having now taken a view of the heathen world in general, and of the wisest and most refined philosophers in particular, we may venture to give a decided opinion, that the light of nature is not sufficient in divine things. And if we turn our eye from this antient picture, and examine the present state of Paganism, marking every late discovery that has been made in various parts of the globe, still we are presented with the same dark shades; ignorance, idolatry, superstition, and immorality every where appear, and strongly refute the whole deistical system.

As the learned and judicious Rollin, in his animated description of the heathen world, has illustrated and confirmed what has been advanced in the foregoing pages, it may not be improper to conclude with a short extract from his history of the arts and sciences of the ancients.

“After having (said he) made almost all the states and kingdoms of the universe pass in review before our eyes, and having considered circumstantially the most important events that passed in them during the course of so many ages, it seems natural enough to go back a moment before we quit this great scene, and to collect it's principal parts into one point of view, in order to our being able to form a better judgment of it. On the one side we see princes, warriors, and conquerors: on the other, magistrates, politicians, and legislators; and in the midst of both, the learned of all kinds, who by the utility, beauty, or sublimity of their knowledge, have acquired great reputation.

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“ The earth is full of persons who excel in arts and sciences. There are many philosophers, orators, and politicians, interpreters of laws, and ministers of justice ; many are consulted as persons of extraordinary wisdom, and their answers are considered as decisions from which it is not allowable to depart. Before me stand princes and kings, full of wisdom and prudence, generals of the most exalted bravery and military knowledge ; politicians of exceeding ability in the art of government ; famous legislators, whose laws and institutions, in many respects, amaze us ; magistrates venerable for the love of the public good ; judges of great wisdom ; and, lastly, citizens entirely devoted to their country. If I turn my eyes towards the arts and sciences, what lustre do not the multitude of admirable works come down to us display ! in which shine forth, according to the difference of subjects, art and disposition, greatness of genius, richness of invention, and beauty of stile, solidity of judgement, and profound erudition.

“ This is the great, the splendid scene, which history, the faithful register of past events, has hitherto presented to our view, and upon which it now remains for us to pass our judgement. Do not men of such profound knowledge deserve the name of sages ?

“ The thoughts of God are very different from those of man. The universe peopled with powerful kings, famous legislators, celebrated philosophers, and learned men, is the object of our admiration and

praises; but the just judge of all things, by whose judgement it is our duty to direct our own, declares, *They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one!*

The censure is general, and without exception; what then is wanted in these pretended wise men? the fear of God, without which there is no true wisdom; the knowledge of their own misery and corruption, and their want of a mediator, a restorer, and redeemer; every thing is in esteem among them except religion and piety; they know neither the use, nor end of any thing; they are ignorant of what they are, and what will become of them. Can folly be more clear and evident?

“ The qualities, knowledge, and maxims of which I speak, were, however, very estimable in themselves; they were the gifts of God, from whom alone comes all good; but the pagans perverted them. I speak here even of those amongst them who passed for the best and wisest, whose virtues were infected either with pride or ingratitude, or to speak more properly, with both. I have observed that certain ages which abounded with illustrious examples, whether at Athens or Rome, exhibit a grand and noble scene in history; but there was at the same time another, which highly disgraced the glory, and sullied the beauty of the former; I mean the idolatry which generally prevailed throughout the universe. The whole earth was covered with thick darkness, and lay plunged in gross ignorance: only one country, and that of very
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small extent, knew the true God, *In Judah is God known, his Name is great in Israel*; elsewhere all mouths were mute in respect to Him, and the hymns of idolatrous solemnities were only invitations to crimes. God suffered all nations to walk after their own way, to make themselves gods of all creatures, to adore all their own passions, to abandon themselves, through despair, to those things which are most shameful: their lives being directed by errors and fable, so that they believed every thing indiscriminately, or nothing at all.

“ One would imagine that man, situated in the midst of the wonders which fill all nature, and largely possessed of the good things of God, could not forget Him, nor remember Him without adoration. But he became deaf to all the voices that proclaimed the majesty and holiness of the Creator; he adored every thing but God: the stars and sun, that declared the divinity, he honored in his stead: wood and stone, under a thousand forms which his wild imagination had invented, were become his gods. In a word, false religions had deluged the whole earth, and if some few were less stupid than the rest, they were equally impious and ungrateful. Did not the only one of these (Socrates) who explained himself too clearly, deny in public what he believed in private? did one of them rise up against the impiety which had substituted mute idols and figures, not only of men, but of beasts and reptiles, to the true and

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living God? Did one of them refrain from going to the idol temples which Socrates authorised by his presence? Socrates was the only one whose religion was put to the trial, did he not treat those who accused him of not adoring the gods worshipped by the Athenians, as false accusers? His apologist, who was also his disciple and friend, does he defend him in any other manner, than by affirming that he always acknowledged the same divinities as the people? And is not Plato himself obliged to own, that Socrates ordered an impious sacrifice to be made in his last moments? A small extract from one of Plato's letters shews how much he was afraid to explain himself upon the nature and unity of God; and, consequently, how far he was from returning Him thanks, confessing Him before men, or exposing himself to the least danger. The shameful actions attributed to the false gods made him blush; but he contented himself with saying, that "either they were not guilty of these crimes, or were not gods if they committed them, without daring to say, that there was but one God." It must be said, to the shame of paganism, that a child among us is more certain, in respect to every thing necessary for us to know of the divinity, than all the philosophers together.

"We see here the principal fruits to be derived from the study of profane history, of which every page declares, what mankind were during so many ages, and what we ourselves should still be, had not the
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the peculiar mercy which made known the Savior of the world to us, drawn us out of the abyfs in which all our forefathers were swallowed up. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed!* A mercy freely and entirely conferred, which we have no power to deserve in any manner of ourselves, and for which we ought to render eternal homage of gratitude and praise to the grace of Jesus Christ."

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